British Youth Culture from 1950 to the Present
CAS HI 250 (Elective B)
[Semester] [Year]

Instructor Information
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Never let the music get in the way of the act.
Kit Lambert, manager of The Who, to the group before every performance.

There was a time when pop music wouldn’t have been able to define what being English was all about, but that’s changed now. If you draw a line from the Beatles and Kinks in the Sixties, through the Jam and the Smiths in the Seventies and Eighties, to Blur in the Nineties, it would define this thing called Englishness as well as anything.
Damon Albarn of Blur, 1994

Course Description
Britain has one of the most innovative and vibrant youth cultures in the world. It has come to define post-colonial British identity and it has helped to make London the cultural and commercial capital of Europe. This course will examine the history, sociology, aesthetics and economics of British youth culture, from the early days of jazz and rock ‘n’ roll, through to Beatlesmania, Punk, Britpop, Rave/EDM and the latest contemporary developments.

How was British youth culture formed, to what extent is it different from America’s and what effect has it had on the wider world?

How is generational identity created and maintained? Through the prism of youth movements in the United Kingdom, you will investigate how underground cults become mainstream culture in the context of changing attitudes to nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class.

Block One introduces how consumer society, mass media and a post-war ‘generation gap’ spawned a new concept of ‘youth culture’ (coined by American sociologist Talcott Parsons) as a range of personal choices built around a specific generational identity.

Block Two focuses on the societal trends which have altered definitions of youth since the 1960s - from advertisers’ concept of the ‘teenager’ (14-24) to that of today’s ‘late youth’ (34-44) and examines the changing content of the global youth market.

Course Objectives
Aesthetic Exploration Learning Outcome 1
Students will understand youth culture as a set of associated arts forms through the consumption of which youth express their identity.
1. Fashion (for example, does Britain’s historically more formal and flamboyant styles reflect a great class consciousness, but also lower levels of homophobia in a more secular society, as David Bowie believed)

2. Music (for example, how black American music from soul to hip-hop has spoken to British youth as a source of rebellion against social prejudice – a ‘rage from the underground’ as Roger Daltrey of The Who once explained his love of rhythm and blues)

3. Art and design (for example, how distinctive black and white graphics expressed the identity and values of participants in Britain’s first multi-racial youth culture, Two Tone and their opposition to the skinhead movement)

By evaluating and contextualising notable historic and contemporary British youth movements, students will be equipped to analyse their world-wide artistic and commercial legacies in three key areas of enquiry:

1. Patterns of consumption: the things people buy (for example, is Adidas a more popular brand than Nike because it is German and not American?)

2. Lifestyle choices: the things people do (for example, does the higher British consumption of certain recreational drugs reflect the fact that Electronic Dance Music became a mass movement in Europe twenty years before it did in America?)

3. Social and political values: the things people believe (for example, to what extent can the legacy of Hippy as an environmental/anti-consumerist movement to be found in today’s vegetarian/vegan trends and in the yoga/mindfulness industry?)

Students will explore the social and psychological context in which different styles of music, fashion and language have been created, disseminated and experience in London and the United Kingdom. They will additionally identify the extent to which youth cultures challenge social, economic and political divisions and evaluate whether commercialisation neutralises that challenge.

Aesthetic Exploration Learning Outcome 2

Students will develop both an aesthetic and a critical acuity, focusing on key terms commonly used in the commercial and intellectual study of fashion, music, language and technology in order to assess the origins, meanings and legacies of youth culture. Students will apply this acuity in the interpretation of movements in fashion and music, looking at the nature of cultural production through the careers and influence of key British artists and designers, including YouTube ‘influencers’.

Aesthetic Exploration Learning Outcome 3

Students will formulate their knowledge and awareness of youth culture as it is expressed through the artistic media of music and fashion in London and in the United Kingdom. They will construct and collate a portfolio of quantitative and qualitative analytic enquiry to extend their intellectual grasp of different genres within the framework of British cultural history, that enables them also to explore their own ideas and responses to printed, visual and physical texts.

Their individual research skills are augmented by a group exercise prior to their examination, in which they will share data on changing definitions of youth, selecting what they find most useful from all sets in order to respond to the examination question. This will further enhance the collaborative skills they have developed in their investigation of and presentation on the concept of ‘youth culture.’

Social Inquiry 1 Learning Outcome 1

Students will learn and apply the key sociological terms and themes of youth culture in order to assess how commerce, culture and identity have interacted in modern Britain. Students will discuss and research the patterns of consumption, lifestyle choices and social/political values that turn underground cults into mainstream culture and moral panics into material profits.
By recognising how and why certain fashions, lifestyles and values are created and utilised in the United Kingdom, students will navigate difference in their daily lives as more informed community members and consumers. Students will identify the tension between individual persona and collective identity in the membership of youth tribes and analyse how youth cultures challenge prevailing ideas about class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race and nationality. They will also interrogate the extent to which advertisers shape youth cults in order to stimulate demand; and conversely how, as a result of both the digital revolution and ‘familial transmission’, youth cults have become ‘detribalised’ as young people create more eclectic styles from the information now available to them online and from within the family.

From this intellectual foundation, they will analyse the extent to which youth cultures have represented or driven social change, both in the United Kingdom and in London, through the recognised economic value of the creative industries and through accompanying socio-political developments, which enable the challenge of youth movements to be incorporated into reformed and popularly accepted definitions of, for example, gender relationships.

Additional Course Objectives
Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Classify the key differences and similarities between British and American society and their impact on the evolution of each youth culture.
- Indicate the applicability of British youth culture and global trends to further business and communications coursework as well as to courses in the arts and social sciences.

Assessments

Class Participation (Blocks One and Two) 10%
Effective preparation grounds successful participation. Students are expected to take physical notes of what they find interesting and useful from the assigned reading. These notes form the basis for their contribution to class discussion, bearing personality differences in mind. Students can then use these notes, augmented by further notes from the discussions, to build their portfolio of knowledge prior to researching and submitting their written work.

Research Paper (Block One) 30%
Students answer the following question in a minimum of 2000 words (eight double-spaced pages):
‘To what extent has youth culture represented social change since the 1960s?’
This paper must include at least one of the case studies discussed in class and utilise information in the textbook, other assigned readings and media viewings, and research from print and digital media (such as that available through the BU London and Mugar libraries) into trends that have not been formally covered in class, all footnoted.

Class Presentation (Block One) 15%
Forming a two-person team with another student, students will invent a contemporary American group or solo artist, describing their music, dress and graphic style and their human profile (social background, personal histories and creative influences). They will then make the case for this character’s viability in today’s British youth market in a fifteen-minute PowerPoint presentation. Pooling individual research that they have done for their papers and conducting further research as a team, students will present statistical data which shows awareness of the social differences between marketability in British and American youth cultures together with illustrative visual material found on YouTube. Which of these differences survived the digital era and how? Students will be graded as a team, initially during the presentation and subsequently based on a printout of presentation slides with relevant sources provided.

Group statistic presentation (Block Two) 5%
Students are divided into two subject-based groups: ‘technology’ and ‘social values’. Individuals in each group research a relevant statistic online. In a five-minute class presentation, each will explain what their statistic reflects about the extent to which the generation gap is narrowing. Demonstrating multiple aspects of what this statistic shows is strongly encouraged. All presented statistics are shared and can then be used in the examination. Students should time their presentation before its delivery.

Examination (Block Two) 40%
This two-hour in-class essay has as its set question ‘To what extent has the generation gap narrowed since the 1960s?’ Students may bring two single-spaced, one-sided pages of printed notes, containing an outline structure with properly sourced and relevant data. Each source must be sequentially numbered. These are submitted with the booklet and count toward the mark.

Grading
The following Boston University table explains the grading system that is used by most faculty members on Boston University’s Study Abroad London Programmes.

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Honour Points</th>
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Grading Criteria
‘Incomplete’ or I grades are not permitted because of the obvious difficulty in making up missed work once the student has left the country. All work must be completed on time. We also do not allow ‘Audits’ (AU), ‘Withdrawals’ (W), or ‘Pass/Fail’ (P) grades.

The grades reflect the quality of the work. Lecturers and students should use the following criteria for an understanding of what each grade means.

A This exceptional grade is assigned only to work that has persistently outstanding quality in both substance and presentation. The student must demonstrate a sustained capacity for independent thought and extensive study, producing rigorous and convincing analyses in well-ordered prose.

A- Awarded to work that is clearly focused and analytical, and based on wide reading. The student must cover all the principal points of a question and systematically develop a persuasive overall thesis, allowing for one or two venial omissions or inapt expressions.

B+, B, B- This range of grades indicates that the student has shown some evidence of original thought and intellectual initiative. The student has cited sources beyond the class materials, and shown a degree of originality in perception and/or approach to the subject. The work will show thoughtful management of material, and a good grasp of the issues. The differences between a B+, a straight B and a B- may reflect poor presentation of the material, or mistakes in punctuation, spelling and grammar.

C+, C, C- Work in this grade range is satisfactory, but uninspiring. If the work is simply a recitation of the class materials or discussions, and shows no sign of genuine intellectual engagement with the
issues, it cannot deserve a higher grade. Should an essay fail to provide a clear answer to the question as set, or argue a position coherently, the grade will fall within this range.

Quality of presentation can lift such work into the upper levels of this grade range. Work of this quality which is poorly presented, and riddled with errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation, will fall into the lower end of the range. To earn a C grade, the work must demonstrate that the student is familiar with the primary course material, be written well enough to be readily understood, be relevant to the assignment, and, of course, be the student’s own work except where properly cited.

**D** A marginal pass can be given where some but not all the elements of the course have been completed satisfactorily.

**F** The failing grade indicates the work is seriously flawed in one or more ways:
- Obvious lack of familiarity with the material
- So poorly written as to defy understanding
- So brief and insubstantial that it fails to properly address the subject
- Material presented is not relevant to the assignment
- Demonstrates evidence of plagiarism (see relevant section in Academic Conduct Code)

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria and policies on plagiarism.

*Final Grades are subject to deductions by the Academic Affairs Office due to unauthorised absences.

**Attendance**

**Classes**

All Boston University Study Abroad London Programme students are expected to attend each and every class session, tutorial, and field trip in order to fulfil the required course contact hours and receive course credit. Any student that has been absent from two class sessions (whether authorised or unauthorised) will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their continued participation on the programme.

**Authorised Absence**

Students who expect to be absent from any class should notify a member of Academic Affairs and complete an Authorised Absence Approval Form 10 working days in advance of the class date (except in the case of absence due to illness, for which students should submit the Authorised Absence Approval Form with the required doctor’s note as soon as possible). The Authorised Absence Approval Request Form is available from: [http://www.bu.edu/london/report-absence/](http://www.bu.edu/london/report-absence/)

Please note: Submitting an Authorised Absence Approval Form does not guarantee an authorised absence

Students may apply for an authorised absence only under the following circumstances:

- Illness (first day of sickness): If a student is too ill to attend class, the student must phone the BU London Student Affairs Office (who will in turn contact the student’s lecturer).
- Illness (multiple days): If a student is missing more than one class day due to illness, the student must call in to the BU London Student Affairs Office each day the student is ill. Students must also provide the Student Affairs office with a completed Authorised Absence Approval Form and a sick note from a local doctor excusing their absence from class.
- Important placement event that clashes with a class (verified by internship supervisor)
- Special circumstances which have been approved by the Directors (see note below).
The Directors will only in the most extreme cases allow students to leave the programme early or for a significant break.

Unauthorised Absence
Any student to miss a class due to an unauthorised absence will receive a 4% grade penalty to their final grade for the course whose class was missed. This grade penalty will be applied by the Academic Affairs Office to the final grade at the end of the course. As stated above, any student that has missed two classes will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their participation on the programme as excessive absences may result in a ‘Fail’ in the class and therefore expulsion from the programme.

Religious Holidays
Boston University’s Office of the University Registrar states:
‘The University, in scheduling classes on religious holidays and observances, intends that students observing those traditions be given ample opportunity to make up work. Faculty members who wish to observe religious holidays will arrange for another faculty member to meet their classes or for cancelled classes to be rescheduled.’

Special Accommodations
Each student will need to contact Disability & Access Services to request accommodations for the semester they are abroad. Students are advised by BU-DAS not to expect the same accommodations as they receive on campus.

BU London can only uphold special accommodations if we have received the appropriate documentation from BU-DAS. We cannot accept letters from other universities/centres.

All disabilities need to be known to DAS in Boston if they are to be used as a reason for requiring a change in conditions, i.e. reduced internship hours or special accommodations for the internship schedule.

Lateness
Students arriving more than 15 minutes after the posted class start time will be marked as late. Any student with irregular class attendance (more than two late arrivals to class) will be required to meet with the Assistant Director of Academic Affairs and if the lateness continues, may have his/her final grade penalised.

COURSE CHRONOLOGY

BLOCK ONE
Session one: Introduction to the study of youth and ‘Mod’, the first British youth culture
Mandatory preparatory reading: MOD, chapters 1, 2 & 3

1) Some key terms in the sociological study of youth, starting with the difference between ‘subcultures’ & ‘counter-cultures’.
2) An historical overview of the origins of modern youth culture in the 1950s: affluence, education and secularisation.
3) Case Study One: Subculture—Mod and Beatlemania (1959-69)
Key Themes: Class mobility, the reformation of masculinity (‘metrosexuality’) & femininity, European identity and the ‘British Invasion’ of America. ‘Did Mod offer a template for cosmopolitan social mobility or was it merely a vehicle for consumerism?’
4) Case Study Two: Counterculture—the Hippy movement (1967-72)
Key Themes: political activism, sexual liberation, ‘transcendental’ drug use and spiritualism.

FIELD TRIP 1: A guided visit to the Abbey Road Studios site.
With its name and a certain zebra crossing catapulted to album-cover immortality by the eponymous Beatles album, Abbey Road Studios connects the cultural history of 19th and 20th century London. Before the Beatles, they were made famous by English classical composer Edward Elgar (who composed the Pomp and Circumstance marches to which many students graduate). When the studio location was put up for sale in 2010, it was Conservative prime minister David Cameron who said it’s as important to our national heritage as Shakespeare’s birthplace. How did this change happen? How can we connect British youth cultures to societal trends and the aging of the youth market globally today?

Session two: The Fashion Industry, Glam Rock and sexual politics
Mandatory preparatory reading: MOD, chapters 4, 5 & 6
Mandatory preparatory viewing: *Quadrophenia* (1979): The most influential cinematic depiction of the Mod movement, executively produced by The Who during the Punk era.

1) Seminar discussion of film viewing *Quadrophenia*
2) ‘Moral panic’ and ‘alternative patriotism’
3) From Catwalk to Boutique & Shopping Mall: an introduction to the history of the fashion industry: the ‘boutique revolution’ and the challenge to ‘haute couture’ fashion houses with the rise of designers Mary Quant, John Stephen & Barbara Hulanicki. Showing of short documentary *In Gear* (1967).
4) Case Study Three: David Bowie & Glam Rock (1971-76)
Key Themes: sexual identity and the birth of LGBTQ movements; the rise of the ‘New Man’, companionate marriage and modern heterosexual relations

Session three: Punk Rock and Popular Feminism
Mandatory preparatory reading: MOD, chapter 7 and Bill Osgerby, *Youth Media* (Routledge, 2004)
‘Bedroom Culture to Girl Power’, 6 pages

1) ‘Familial transmission’ and ‘the symbolic re-appropriation of style.’
2) Case Study Four: Punk Rock (1976-81)
Key Themes: Class conflict, economic recession & disillusionment with political elites; women’s civil rights & the rise of ‘pop feminism’; the independent music industry and youth control of pre-digital media. ‘Did Girl Power mark a popularisation of feminist ideas?’
3) Case Study Five: Skinhead (1968-83)
Key Themes: Working class reaction to the reformation of masculinity and the return of ‘toxic masculinity’; football hooliganism and neo-Nazi gang culture.
Seminar discussion of film viewing *This Is England*.

Session four: Black & Asian British Youth Cultures
Mandatory preparatory reading: MOD, chapter 8
Mandatory preparatory viewing: *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002). Autobiographical story of an Anglo-Indian teenager’s navigation of her British identity through involvement in a multi-racial womens’ soccer team by Gurinder Chadha, a veteran of the Two Tone movement.

1) ‘Cultural appropriation’ versus ‘cultural embrace.’
2) Case Study Six: British Reggae (1973-83) and Two Tone (1979-81).
Key Themes: The origins and emergence of distinctive ethnic minority British youth cultures; the Rock Against Racism movement; the effect of these pioneering cultures on racial integration.

Key Themes: Tensions between immigrant family life and the navigation of Britishness through youth culture; stereotypes of Asian youth as family and study oriented versus competing stereotypes of Afro-Caribbean youth as hyper-sexual and hyper-criminal.

4) Seminar discussion of film viewing _Bend It Like Beckham._

5) The evolution of Grime (British Hip-Hop) and its impact on contemporary race relations.

**BLOCK TWO**

**Session five: The Political Incorporation of Youth Culture**
Mandatory preparatory reading: _MOD_, chapters 9 and 10

1) ‘Detribalisation’ and ‘cultural industries’.
2) Key Themes: the decline of moral panics and the patriotic celebration of youth culture as ‘national heritage’ by political elites since the 1990s; the greater artistic, commercial and social value placed on music and fashion.
4) Seminar discussion of film viewing _Human Traffic._

**Session six: Class presentations and submission of midterm paper**
For details see ‘Assessments’ section above.

**FIELD TRIP 2:** Visit to a fashion or music exhibition at the Victoria & Albert Museum (Note: this is dependent on the V&A’s schedule in any given semester). Past special exhibits have showcased the work of Mary Quant, Vivienne Westwood, Alexander McQueen and David Bowie, among others. Students have on more than one occasion interacted with fellow visitors who share their personal history with exhibition items, often illuminating sociological aspects of the pieces as well—for example, one woman described the pride and trepidation with which she wore a Mary Quant “tie-dress” to her first job in an office, in the 1960s.

**Session seven: Trends in Contemporary Youth Culture 1: The ‘Greying of Youth’**
Mandatory preparatory reading: Bill Osgerby, _Youth Media_ (Routledge, 2004), ‘Greying Youth’, 3 pages and _MOD_, Conclusion

Key themes: Social trends that have narrowed the generation gap, from human longevity to the colonisation of youth culture by middle-aged consumers. The changing nature of the ‘youth market’ from the multi-product sale of ‘youthfulness’ to the promotion of a ‘late youth’ market by corporations and advertisers. The familial transmission of youth culture and teenage strategies to maintain the generation gap, from social media to gang culture.

**Session eight: Trends in Contemporary Youth Culture 2: Technology & Detribalisation**

The impact of social media on patterns of socialising and consumption; ‘glocalisation’ in the worldwide transmission of youth culture; e.g. ‘flashmobbing’ in Britain, the US and around the world. Plus, ‘mashed up’: the detribalisation of youth cultures since the 1990s.
Session nine: Trends in Contemporary Youth Culture 3: Strategies for maintaining the
generation gap
The familial transmission of youth culture and teenage strategies to maintain the generation gap,
from linguistic codes to gang culture.

Statistic Presentations
For details see ‘Assessments’ section above.

Session ten: Soho and Handel & Hendrix in London
FIELD TRIP 3: Guided tour of Soho, the main artistic area of London since the 18th century, the
crucible of 20th century British youth culture and home to the creative industries today. The tour will
end with a visit to the houses where the German composer George Frederic Handel lived in the 18th
century and where Jimi Hendrix lived in the 1960s.

Final Examination Examination times and locations will be posted on the BU London website
two weeks before examination dates.

BOOKS AND COURSE MATERIALS
Required Reading
This book MUST be read in order to gain a basic understanding of the course.

Richard Weight, *Mod: From Bebop to Britpop, Britain’s Biggest Youth Movement* (Random
House/Vintage, 2015)

AND: Selections from Bill Osgerby, *Youth Media* (Routledge, 2004) and Andy Bennet (ed.),
*Ageing and Youth Cultures: Music, Style and Identity* (Routledge, 2012) available on the course webpage.
Additional readings may also be posted on the course webpage:

Supplementary Reading
Referring to a selection of these books will deepen your understanding and enjoyment of the course.
Always look at the bibliographies of any books you refer to; you will discover many useful texts and
links that are not, for reasons of space, listed here.

General
Bennett, Andy, *Cultures of Popular Music* (OUP, 2001)
Reynolds, Simon, *Retromania: Pop Culture’s Addiction to its Own Past* (Faber, 2011)
Shapiro, Harry, *Waiting for the Man: The Influence of Drugs and Popular Music* (2nd Ed., Helter Skelter,
1999)

Themes
Class
Davis, John, *Youth and the Condition of Britain: Images of Adolescent Conflict* (Continuum, 1990)
Hall, Stuart and Jefferson, Tony, *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Postwar Britain*
(Routledge, 1993)

Gender & Sexuality
Goldman, Vivien, *Revenge of the She-Punks: A Feminist Music History from Poly Styrene to Pussy Riot* (Texas,
2019)
MacRobbie, Angela, *Feminism and Youth Culture* (Routledge, 1998)
Padel, Ruth, *I’m A Man: Sex, Gods and Rock ‘n’ Roll* (Faber, 2000)
Reynolds, Simon, *The Sex Revolts: Gender, Rebellion and Rock ‘n’ Roll* (Serpent’s Tail, 1995)
Race
Hebdige, Dick, Cut N’ Mix: Culture, Identity and Caribbean Music (Routledge, 1987)
Hyder, Rehan, Brimful of Asia: Negotiating Ethnicity on the UK Music Scene (Ashgate, 2004)
Jones, Simon, Black Culture, White Youth: The Reggae Tradition from JA to UK (Macmillan, 1988)

Fashion
Breward, Christopher, Fashion (Oxford, 2003)
MacRobbie, Angela, In The Culture Society: Art, Fashion and Popular Music (Routledge, 1999)
MacRobbie, Angela, British Fashion Design: Rag Trade or Image Industry? (Routledge, 1998)
Tungate, Mark, Fashion Brands: Branding Style From Armani to Zara (Kogan Page, 2004)

Music & Other Media
Bugge, Christian, ‘Selling Youth in the Age of Affluence: Marketing to Youth in Britain since 1959,’
Donnelly, K.J., Pop Music in British Cinema (BFI, 2001)
Mundy, John, Popular Music on Screen (Manchester University Press, 1999)
Napier-Bell, Simon, Black Vinyl, White Powder: (Ebury, 2002). A manager’s inside account of the
British music industry
Passman, Donald S., All You Need to Know About the Music Business (4th UK Ed., Penguin, 2004)

Genres
Mod
Barnes, Richard, Mods! (Plexus, 1991)
Rawlings, Terry, Mod: A Very British Phenomenon (Omnibus, 2000)

Punk
Savage, Jon, England’s Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock and Beyond (Faber, 1992)

Reggae and Ska
Bradley, Lloyd, Bass Culture: When Reggae Was King (Penguin, 2001)
Thompson, Dave, Wheels out of Gear: 2 Tone, The Specials and a world in flame (Helter Skelter, 2004)

New Wave
Reynolds, Simon, Rip It Up and Start Again: Postpunk 1978-84 (Faber, 2005)

Britpop

Hip-Hop
Chang, Jeff, Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation (Ebury, 2005)

Rave/EDM
Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton, Last Night A DJ Saved My Life (Headline, 1999)
Garratt, Sheryl, Adventures In Wonderland: A Decade of Club Culture (Headline, 1998)
Reynolds, Simon, Energy Flash: Journey Through Rave Music and Dance Culture (Picador, 1998)